

Experience in Clinical Application of Ligou Point

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Ligou (LR 5), a point of the Liver Channel of Foot-Jueyin, located 5 *cun* above the tip of the medial malleolus, in the depression of the medial surface of the tibia, has been used in successive dynasties to treat irregular menstruation, leucorrhea with reddish discharge, difficulty in urination, atrophy-flaccidity and arthralgia of the lower limbs. The authors have used the point to treat some refractory diseases with good therapeutic effect.

Case 1: A female patient, 45 years old, suffered from emotional depression for many years because her husband had a lover. Two days before, she suddenly lost her sight of both eyes due to quarreling with her husband, accompanied by abdominal pain, diarrhea, anorexia, and epigastric stuffiness and pain. She revealed dark tongue with purplish spots on the border and wiry and thready pulse. She was vainly treated in a hospital before coming to the authors' department for treatment. Ophthalmological examination showed that the appearance and eyeground of both eyes were in normal condition. Ligou (LR 5) was selected and punctured with reducing method and Zusanli (ST 36) was supplemented as a combination. The needles were retained for 20 min. After the removal of the needles, the patient was gradually able to see the profile of people, and then was asked to take *Xiaoyao Wan* (逍遥丸 Carefree Pills) to strengthen the therapeutic effect. On the next day, she said that her eyesight recovered, there were no more abdominal pain and diarrhea, and epigastric fullness and pain and poor appetite were obviously relieved.

Note: The patient lost her sight because of

dysfunction of the liver, disorder of *qi* and obstruction of channels and collaterals due to depressed emotion for a long time and damage to the liver by anger. Moreover, invasion of the spleen and stomach by the liver-*qi* causes abdominal pain, diarrhea, epigastric fullness and poor appetite. Acupuncture at Ligou (LR 5) can soothe the liver and gallbladder, regulate *qi* and remove collateral obstruction. Acupuncture at Zusanli (ST 36) can nourish *qi* and strengthen the spleen. The two points used together can relieve depression and promote circulation of *qi* and blood, thus curing symptoms.

Case 2: A 20 year-old student, suffered from facial acne for 3 years, accompanied with fatness, easy hunger, irritability, bitterness in the mouth, and difficulty in defecation. The sebaceous plugs could be forced out from the skin lesions, and the lesions were often filled with pus. She revealed oily face, red tongue, yellow fur, wiry, rolling and rapid pulse, and halitosis. Her illness condition was aggravated whenever in examination or nervousness. Without improvement of her illness condition in many treatments, she came to the authors' department for treatment. Ligou (LR 5), Hegu (LI 4) and local points in acne area were punctured and the needles were retained for 30 min. The first treatment obviously alleviated redness and swelling of acne. Ten sessions resulted in no appearance of new acnes, smooth skin with little dark red scars. Then Sanyinjiao (SP 6) was used instead of Hegu (LI 4) to strengthen the effect of promoting blood circulation and removing blood stasis. She was cured after more than one month of treatment.

Note: Acne is mainly caused by retention of heat in the spleen and stomach, and accumulation of phlegm and dampness due to excessive intake of fat, sweet and pungent food. In some patients, the stress from study and work influences the hepatic function of maintaining the normal flow of *qi* to cause generation of pathogenic fire and impairment of the spleen, thus leading to stagnation of dampness and heat in the Yangming Channel in the face to cause acne. Acupuncture at Ligou (LR 5) can purge fire from the liver and gallbladder and remove dampness. Acupuncture at Hegu (LI 4) can eliminate excessive damp-heat from Yangming and improve circulation of *qi* and blood in the face.

Case 3: A female patient, 76 years old, suffered from repeated attacks of facial pain for 5 years. 2 weeks before, a quarrel with her family member triggered off lightning-like burning pain in her right cheek, upper and lower jaw when she chewed, spoke, brushed her teeth and moved her facial muscles. Failed to be treated in other places, she came to the author's department. Her symptoms were severe facial pain, lassitude, vexation, irritation, bitterness in the mouth, constipation, abdominal distension, poor and little sleep disturbed by dreams. She revealed red tongue, yellow sticky fur, and wiry rapid pulse. When having a fit of facial pain, she closed her right eye in tears with ceaseless moan. She received acupuncture treatment. Ligou (LR 5) and Xianggu (ST 43) were punctured with reducing method. The needles were retained for 30 min. On the next day, the frequency of attacks was reduced. Her facial pain was cured after 10 sequential sessions, without relapse in a 3-year follow-up visit.

Note: Facial pain, also known as trigeminal neuralgia, occurs mostly in women more than 40 years of age. It can be caused by invasion of wind-cold, wind-heat, and obstruction of channel *qi*, or excessive heat in the liver and stomach, and pathogenic fire derived from stagnation of the liver-*qi*. Emotional changes can

induce the attack. TCM believes that obstruction of channel *qi* is the main pathogenesis of facial pain. Acupuncture at Ligou (LR 5) can soothe the liver and gallbladder and acupuncture at Xianggu (ST 43) can regulate Yangming channel *qi*, they can exert in conjunction the effects of regulating *qi* and clearing away heat, and easing collateral and stopping pain.

Case 4: A male patient, 20 years old, complained that 3 days before, his testes were swollen and painful. He took antibiotics but to no avail. So he came to the author's department for treatment. 10 days before he suffered from parotitis uncured so far. Examination showed red and swollen scrotum with high temperature of local skin, swelling of left epididymis with tenderness radiating to the left groin, red tongue, yellow sticky fur, and wiry, rolling and rapid pulse; accompanying symptoms were fever and aversion to cold, dry mouth, bitterness in the mouth, yellow urine, and constipation. He was diagnosed as having acute epididymitis, and acupuncture treatment was given. Ligou (LR 5) and Xingjian (LR 2) were punctured with reducing method. On the next day after the treatment, his pain, redness and swelling in left epididymis were alleviated. He received 3 more treatments and was cured.

Note: TCM holds that the Liver Channel of Foot-Jueyin runs around the external genitals into lower abdomen, and its divergent collaterals run to the Gallbladder Channel of Foot-Shaoyang upward to testes and converge in the penis. The divergent Gallbladder Channel of Foot-Shaoyang emerges from the lateral aspect of the thigh, goes to the medial aspect of the lower limb and enters the hairy region where it communicates with the Liver Channel of Foot-Jueyin. The two channels are closely related to the reproductive system. Invasion of the external genitals by damp-heat from the liver and gallbladder can cause the disease. Acupuncture at Ligou (LR 5) of the Liver Channel of Foot-Jueyin can clear away damp-heat from the liver and gallbladder, promote circulation of *qi* in the two channels, while

acupuncture at Xingjian (LR 2) can purge excessive fire from the liver and gallbladder with good therapeutic effect.

COMMENTS

The reasons why Ligou (LR 5) can treat the above-mentioned cases are summarized as follows.

1. The pathogenesis of the above-mentioned cases is related to disorder of liver *qi*. Because of the exterior-interior relationship of the liver and the gallbladder, heat developed by stagnated liver *qi* can easily transmit to the gallbladder. Acupuncture at Ligou (LR 5) can soothe the liver and purge heat from the liver and the gallbladder to treat the disease.

2. In the above-mentioned cases, sudden blindness is caused by disorder of the liver *qi* due to emotional depression. The generation and development of acne and facial pain are closely connected to mental factors. One of the important factors is that heat developed by stagnated liver *qi* can impair *qi*

circulation in Shaoyang and Yangming channels. Swelling and pain of the scrotum are caused by downward flow of damp-heat in the liver channel. The key principle of treating the above-mentioned cases is to regulate the functional activities of *qi*, and unblock channels and activate collaterals.

3. Acupuncture at Ligou (LR 5), a Luo-connecting point of the Liver Channel of Foot-Jueyin is able to clear away damp-heat from the liver and gallbladder. It can not only treat the above-mentioned diseases but also treat jaundice, chronic prostatitis, chronic dacryocystitis, eczema, herpes zoster and other diseases related to damp-heat of the liver and gallbladder, and relieve symptoms of diabetes. The authors hold that with widespread indications and good therapeutic effect, the application of Ligou (LR 5) is worthy of further study in order to play its role in medical treatment.

(Translated by DUAN Shu-min 段树民)